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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9083
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS IMMEDIATE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 5067
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 2541
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0974
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1866
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 4615
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2007
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 2673
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0892
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 2688
RUEHBD/AMCONSUL PERTH 0819
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 001017

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: NDI SPONSORS VISIT OF BURMESE EXILES

REF: JAKARTA 1001 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph Legend Novak, reasons 1.4 (b+d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: The National Democratic Institute (NDI) and local NGO's sponsored a visit by Burmese exiles to Jakarta this week. At the opening of a photo exhibit on Burma's plight, speakers--including the exiles--highlighted the regime's failure to allow humanitarian relief to reach cyclone victims, and its brutal crackdown and repression of minorities. They called for Indonesia and ASEAN to do more--and immediately. The NDI-sponsored event is a follow-up to Mission's conference on Burma in March, and is part of the USG's effort to inform Indonesian civil society and to stimulate action regarding Burma. END SUMMARY.

NDI-SPONSORED VISIT

12. (SBU) NDI and local NGO's sponsored a May 21-23 visit by Burmese exiles to Jakarta. Working with NDI, Mission helped structure the visit. As part of the trip, the Burmese visitors and local NGO representatives opened a photo exhibit regarding Burma and the situation there on May 21 at a local hotel. The Burmese group included (bio information provided by NDI):

-- Venerable Ashin Nayaka. The Venerable Ashin Nayak is a Visiting Scholar at Columbia University in New York City. His doctoral dissertation focused on the role of Buddhism in the social, cultural and political developments in Burma. U Nayaka has extensive experience in the struggle for democracy in Burma and is currently a member of the International Burmese Monks Organization (IBMO), also known as Sasana Moli;

-- Venerable U Awbata. U Awbata was a leading monk in the 2007 Saffron Revolution in Burma. He is also a member of the International Burmese Monks Organization (IBMO). He is currently based in Sri Lanka;

-- Mohammad Taher. Taher is a Rangoon University graduate. He is a Muslim from Burma and was forced to leave the country in 1982 due to religious persecution. He is currently the Executive Director of Kaladan News Agency based in Bangladesh;

--Soe Augn. Augn is the Spokesperson of the National Council of the Union of Burma (NCUB) which is a broad-based umbrella organization of pro-democracy Burman and non-Burman ethnic nationalities; and,

-- Aung Myo Thein. Thein is an alumni of the 1998 uprising in Burma. He is a former political prisoner having spent over six years in prison for his beliefs. He is a member of the Assistance Association for Political Prisoner Burma (AAPP-B), an organization working to free Burma's political prisoners.

OPENING OF EXHIBIT

13. (U) A Burmese monk--Venerable U Awbata--opened the photographic exhibit--which drew a good crowd--with a moving personal account of repression in Burma. Awbata condemned the failure to help people affected by Cyclone Nargis as yet another example of the Burmese regime's many crimes. He gave a vivid account of the bloody crackdown in September 2007 and spoke of the suffering of cyclone victims in the Irrawaddy Delta. Awbata called on ASEAN governments to demand genuine reform in Burma and to press the regime for humanitarian relief for cyclone victims.

14. (U) Other Burmese exiles highlighted the plight of minority groups. Taher, the Rohingya journalist who fled Burma in 1982, described the situation as a "slow-burning genocide." He outlined the Burmese regime's systematic

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repression of Rohingya Muslims and other minority groups. He underscored that repression of these groups destabilized the region through the outflow of refugees into neighboring countries. Taher called on Indonesian Muslims to press the GOI to demand that the regime respect the human rights of all the Burmese people, including minority groups.

15. (U) Indonesians also spoke at the event. Parliamentarians, for example, continued their criticism of the Burmese regime and of what they characterized as ASEAN's tepid response. Eva Susuma Sundari, a member of the Indonesian legislature (DPR) and a leader in the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Myanmar Caucus, described the regime's response to the cyclone as "criminally negligent." She strongly criticized Indonesia for failing to support UN Security Council action on the issue. A representative of the Department of Foreign Affairs also spoke, underscoring GOI concern about the situation, and noting continued Indonesian efforts to urge the regime to open up to real change.

OTHER MEETINGS

16. (SBU) In addition to the public event, the Burmese met with Indonesian parliamentarians and government officials. They also met key leaders of Indonesia's two largest mass-Muslim organizations: Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama.

STIMULATING CONCERN

17. (C) The NDI-sponsored event is a follow-up to Mission's conference on Burma in March, and is part of the USG's effort to stimulate and inform Indonesian civil society regarding Burma. As with the March conference, the visit by the Burmese team seems to have helped open eyes regarding the situation in Burma. The timing of the visit--in that it took place against the background of the abject failure of the regime to deal adequately with the aftermath of the cyclone--was also conducive for discussions of the regime's true nature. Mission is working on further activities to follow-up the NDI effort.

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